

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (*NEPA REQUIRED)

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) gives people, organizations, and governments’ time to review and comment on proposed major Federal actions. This occurs throughout the planning process beginning with scoping meetings and continuing through comment periods on draft and final reports. Comments are accepted and considered throughout the planning process.

The original SWC draft report was previously released in December 2013 and the initial public review was completed in February 2014. However, as a result of the substantial public, technical, and policy comments received, USACE performed additional analyses in 2014 which resulted in significant revisions to the NED and NER Tentatively Selected Plans that warranted a second 45-day public review. Additional public meetings will be held and the study website will reflect changes made in this revised report.

Engaging the public and receiving input from the public, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations on the contents of the report is critical to achieve the USACE objective to “[e]nhance trust and understanding with customers, stakeholders, teammates, and the public through strategic engagement and communication.” Public participation efforts began with the study scoping process and will continue through the conclusion of the formal comment period. In addition to traditional mailings, a web site, and other social media tools were used in an effort to broadly distribute study information.

6.1 Public Scoping Meetings

Scoping and the preparation of a scoping report is the initial step in the preparation of an EIS and is useful in identifying: (1) the project and procedural actions and changes to be made, (2) the alternatives to be evaluated and rigorously explored as well as those alternatives to be ultimately eliminated and, (3) the environmental resources to be considered in impact evaluations. A scoping report includes information about public meetings, meeting notices, and comments made by citizens, other interested parties, and stakeholders who attend the meetings.

Public Notification: The public was notified of three separate public scoping meetings held on March 24, 25, and 26, in 2009 in the three parishes covered by the Study Area. (see Table 6-1). The following communication mechanisms were used for notification: (1) a Notice of Intent to prepare a Draft EIS was published in the Federal Register (Volume 74, Number 38) on February 27, 2009; (2) a scoping meeting announcement requesting comments was mailed to Federal, state, and local agencies, and interested groups and individuals on March 13, 2009; and (3) a media advisory announcing the scoping meetings was provided to more than 200 media outlets on March 13, 2009.

Table 6-1: Public scoping meetings.

Date	Parish	Location	Attendees
March 24, 2009 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Cameron Parish Cameron Parish Courthouse	119 Smith Circle Cameron, LA	51
March 25, 2009 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Calcasieu Parish Central School Arts & Humanities Center	809 Kirby Street Lake Charles, LA	59
March 26, 2009 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Vermilion Parish Abbeville High School	1305 Wildcat Dr. Abbeville, LA	170

Scoping Comment Categorization by Theme. A total of 382 specific comments were received during the three scoping meetings and were categorized by subject and ranked. A subject raised more than three times was classified as a “theme” and a total of 13 themes was identified.

Table 6-2: Scoping comment themes.

Rank	Theme	# of Comments	% Occurrence
1	Storm risk reduction	57	14.9%
2	Importance of considering entire scope of study and cumulative	53	13.9%





Rank	Theme	# of Comments	% Occurrence
	effects of other projects		
3	Coastal protection	52	13.6%
4	Impact of changes to drainage patterns	38	9.9%
5	Importance of cooperation between Federal agencies, parishes, and stakeholders	34	8.9%
6	Timeframe and funding related to project implementation	27	7.1%
8	Salinity and saltwater intrusion	23	6.0%
9	Wetlands protection/restoration	22	5.8%
10	Protection of existing developed land	18	4.7%
11	Permitting issues	15	3.9%
12	Concern regarding loss of Highway 82	12	3.1%
13	Impacts to wildlife	4	1.0%
7	Other*	27	7.1%
	Total	382	100.0%

* Comments categorized as "other" occurred only once or were not directly related to the proposed action.

6.2 NEPA Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies (as defined under 40 CFR 1501.6) for this study include the following:

- U.S. Department of the Interior–USFWS
- U.S. Department of Commerce–NOAA and NMFS
- U.S. Department of Agriculture–NRCS

6.3 Other Agencies Participating as a "Cooperating Agency"

The state of Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the state of Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also participated but not as formal cooperating agencies.

6.4 Other Public Coordination Meetings

Other additional public meetings were held in the three parish area on:

- 2009 - July 21 thru July 23 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2010 - February 22 thru March 4 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2010 - July 12 thru July 15 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2011 - October 3 thru October 6 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2012 - April 3 thru April 6 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2013 - July 31 thru August 2 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.

The primary interest of meeting participants was the potential levee alignments and impacts to communities. Other comments were directed to the construction schedule, potential impacts to wetlands, the value of hurricane evacuation routes, and funding.

6.5 Draft Report Recipients

Federal, state, and local government agencies; elected officials; stakeholders; citizens; businesses; libraries, and universities, and other interested persons who requested copies were provided with the initial draft report. Notices of availability were mailed to the CEMVN District stakeholder/NEPA mailing lists. A full list of report recipients is available upon request. The following stakeholders received a copy of the 2013 draft report:

Table 6-3: List of 2013 initial draft report recipients.

Louisiana Congressional Delegation	Louisiana State Senators & Representatives	Levee Districts & Floodplain Management Agencies
Senator David Vitter	Senator Dan "Blade" Morrish	Chenier Plain Restoration & Protection Authority



Senator William Cassidy	Senator Jonathan Perry	Iberia Parish Levee District
Congressman Ralph Abraham	Representative Bob Hensgens	
Congressman Charles W. Boustany, Jr.	Representative Simone Champagne	
Congressman Garret Graves		
Congressman John Fleming		
Congressman Cedric Richmond		
Congressman Steve Scalise		
Cameron Parish Government	Calcasieu Parish Government	Vermilion Parish Government
Darryl Fargue, Police Jury President	Police Jury	Nathan Granger, Police Jury President
Police Jury	Parish Administrator	Police Jury
Tina Horn, Parish Administrator		Tim Creswell, Assistant Emergency Manager
City of Abbeville	City of Lake Charles	Town of Delcambre Government
Mayor	Randy Roach, Mayor	Mayor
Council	City Administrator and City Council	Alderman
Federal Agencies		
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Department of Energy: Office of Environmental Compliance	Department of Transportation: Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration; Southwest Region, Federal Aviation Administration
Department of Agriculture: Carl J. Breville, <i>Natural Resources Conservation Service</i> ; Kevin Norton, State Conservationist; Michael Trusclair, District Conservationist	Department of Homeland Security: <i>Federal Emergency Management Agency</i> ; Gary Zimmerer, Region VI	Environmental Protection Agency: Office of Federal Activities, EIS Filing Section: Region VI, Marine and Wetlands Section; Rhonda Smith, Region VI - Office of Planning and Coordination
Department of the Army: Rayford E. Wilbanks	Department of the Interior: <i>Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</i> ; Lacombe Office ; Lafayette Field Office, Jeff Weller, Field Supervisor	Department of Commerce: <i>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration</i> ; David Bernhart, Protected Species Division; Richard Hartman, Habitat Conservation Division; NEPA Coordinator, Office of Program, Planning & Integration
Federal Emergency Management Agency: Gary Zimmerer, Region VI		
State of Louisiana Agencies and Offices		
Governor: Honorable Bobby Jindal Lieutenant Governor: Jay Dardenne	Department of Agriculture & Forestry: Office of Forestry; Mike Strain; Matthew Keppinger, Office of Agriculture & Environmental Science	Department of Public Works
Governor's Office for Coastal Activities	Department of Environmental Quality: Environmental Planning Division ; Office of the Secretary; Scott Guilliams	Department of Transportation & Development
Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority: Jerome Zeringue, Norwyn Johnson	Department of Health & Hospitals: Office of Public Health, Center for Environmental Health	Department of Wildlife & Fisheries: Secretary; Maurice Watson; Tim Morrison; Gary Lester, Natural Heritage Program
Lake Charles Harbor and Terminal District: Channing Hayden	Department of Natural Resources: Keith Lovell, Interagency Affairs; Charlie Mestayer, Lafayette Field Office; Division of State Lands; Office of Conservation, Surface Mining Division; Consistency Coordinator, Coastal Resources Program	Division of Administration: State Land Office; State Planning Office
Secretary of State	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board: Chip Kline	Office of Cultural Development: Pam Breaux, State Historic Preservation Officer; Division of Outdoor Recreation
Office of the Attorney General	Governor's Office of Indian Affairs	State Board of Commerce & Industry
Federally Recognized Tribes		
Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas	Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana	Seminole Tribe of Florida
Caddo Nation of Oklahoma	Jena Band of Choctaw Indians	Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana
Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Seminole Nation of Oklahoma	



6.6 Views of the public based upon public comments received on the 2013 draft report.

This revised draft report includes comments received on the initial 2013 draft report which was made available for public review and comment from December 13, 2013 until January 27, 2014. The 45-day public review period was extended until February 13, 2014, due to a technical error in receiving email comments. Two NEPA public meetings were conducted during public review of the 2013 draft report on:

- January 7, 2014 at the Lake Charles Civic Center - Contraband Room (2nd Floor), 900 Lakeshore Dr, Lake Charles, LA 70601.
- January 9, 2014 at the Vermilion Parish Library - Abbeville Branch Library, 405 E St Victor St, Abbeville, LA.

An open house for each public meeting was conducted from 6:00pm to 6:30pm with the main meeting commencing at 6:30pm and continuing until approximately 8:30pm. Comments made during the meetings were memorialized either by a court reporter or on hand-written comment cards provided at the meetings. A cumulative total of 121 people attended the 2 public hearings on January 7 and 9, 2014, with a total of 12 individuals offering oral comments. CEMVN received 11 written comments from Federal, state, parish and local governments, and 31 written comments from members of the public, all of which were postmarked within the comment period. Many of the written comments contained multiple comments and some contained attachments. A total of 578 individual comments were received during the public comment period between December 13, 2014 and February 13, 2014. The major themes of the comments included: the USACE SMART Planning procedures; levee and other forms of structural protection and/or risk reduction; consideration of impacts on agriculture, the Henry Hub, and other commercial industrial assets; the benefit/cost calculations for structural risk reduction; nonstructural risk reduction measures that were not wanted; levee “discrimination;” concerns that the project provides more protection for wetlands than for human life/people; ecosystem restoration; increasing salinities in freshwater areas; and impacts on the Calcasieu Ship Channel.

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations for Implementing the NEPA (40CFR§ 1503.4(a)), requires CEMVN to assess and consider all public comments both individually and collectively, and respond by one or more of the following means in the final EIS:

- Modify alternatives including the proposed action.
- Develop and evaluate alternatives not previously given serious consideration.
- Supplement, improve, or modify analyses performed.
- Make factual corrections.

In addition, CEMVN must explain why comments do not warrant further agency response, citing the sources, authorities, or reasons which support CEMVN’s position and, if appropriate, indicate those circumstances which would trigger a reappraisal or further response. All substantive comments received on the 2013 initial draft report are included in Appendix J. The oral testimonies were reviewed and were considered in the preparation of this revised report. All oral and written salient comments, questions, and concerns were identified. Several comments received warranted revisions to the initial draft report including but not limited to, inclusion of the 0-25 year floodplain for the NED Plan, the development of additional and sufficient detail to make the NER Plan features constructible as opposed to programmatic, and also clarifications and updated and additional information. All registered commenting meeting participants, as well as those providing written comments, will be provided a copy of this Final Report. In addition, this revised draft Report will be posted at: <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/About/Projects/SouthwestCoastal.aspx>.